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ABSTRACT

This newsletter is part of an effort to improve mastery of the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS). Responses of teachers to a survey in the Spring of 1987 concerning their beliefs and facts about the TEAMS are reported, along with clarifying facts about this criterion referenced test. Teaching to the TEAMS is advisable because it is part of a program intended to promote test-driven instruction on skills all students should know. Results of the Austin (Texas) Independent School District (AISD) show that AISD students scored higher on the 1987 TEAMS than on the 1986 test, although gains were not as large as those made by students in other urban Texas districts. On exit-level TEAMS, AISD has ranked number 1 since 1985, with 99.4% of students passing both areas of the tests and fulfilling requirements for graduation. Performance of educationally disadvantaged (Chapter 1) students in grade 3, English TEAMS data for limited English proficient students in grades 1 through 9, and Spanish TEAMS data for grades 1 and 3 are outlined. A summary is given of ways to prepare students for the TEAMS. Seven graphs are included. (SLD)

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FEEDBACK

Teaming Up On Teams

Austin Independent School District

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FEEDBACK

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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TEAMING UP ON TEAMS

We all know the statewide importance placed on mastery of the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS). In AISD, TEAMS mastery is emphasized in both the 1987-88 District priorities and in AISD's accreditation goals for 1985-1990. A "TEAM" effort is required to improve TEAMS mastery. This newsletter is part of that effort. Here we will share:

- Teachers' beliefs and facts about the TEAMS,
- Key results on the 1986-87 TEAMS:
  - Overall,
  - Chapter 1 students, and
  - LEP students (English and Spanish), and
- Strategies for preparing students to take the TEAMS.

We hope this will clarify some important facts and help you prepare students for the TEAMS.

BELIEFS AND FACTS ABOUT TEAMS

There are some basic facts about TEAMS that everyone may not know. In this section we will share the responses from teachers on the spring, 1987, Teacher Survey, along with some clarifying facts about the test.

WHAT IS THE TEAMS? HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM THE ITBS OR THE TAP?

The Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS), mandated by the State as a result of House Bill 72, is a **criterion-referenced test**. A selected sample of Texas' essential elements considered the **minimum** all students should master is covered. The TEAMS is very limited in scope, and each skill is tested with four multiple-choice items (except for the writing sample). The information obtained with this test indicates how well a student, class, campus, or district masters an objective according to standards set by the State Board of Education (SBOE).

The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) are **norm-referenced tests**. A sample of students nationwide was tested to create the norms. This allows us to compare the performance of our students with that of students across the United States. The tests

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were selected as part of AISD's locally adopted testing program after a thorough review of available norm-referenced tests by teachers, principals, instructional coordinators, and evaluators. The ITBS is given annually in grades K - 8, and the TAP is given in grades 9 -12.

In contrast to the TEAMS, the ITBS and TAP cover a broad range of skills appropriate for each grade level. Test items are also more difficult, on the average, than TEAMS items. A more complete measure of the skills of AISD's average and high achievers is thus provided. The best preparation for the ITBS and TAP is to cover the AISD curriculum as fully and as well as possible.

Results on all these tests may point to areas in which the District as a whole or individual schools excel or need improvement.

Teacher Survey Responses	*Clarifying Facts*

DOES TEAMS COVER ONLY THE MINIMUM SKILLS?

66% of the teachers surveyed in spring, 1987, agreed that TEAMS objectives represent minimum skills; 21% were neutral, and 13% disagreed.

The TEAMS covers only minimum skills—not all of the essential elements or the whole range of skills in AISD's curriculum.

WHO SHOULD MASTER THE TEAMS?

When a random sample of AISD teachers was surveyed in spring, 1987, 56% agreed that all students should master TEAMS objectives; 17% were neutral, and 27% disagreed.

The District's philosophy that "all students can learn" and the fact that TEAMS does focus on minimum basic skills strongly suggest that all students should be expected to master the TEAMS objectives (except for some special cases, e.g., some special education students).

IS TEACHING TO THE TEAMS OK?

When teachers were surveyed, 49% believed it was appropriate to teach to the TEAMS; 25% were neutral, and 26% believed it was inappropriate.

YES! The TEAMS is part of a program intended to promote "test-driven" instruction. That is, it covers skills considered **essential for all students in the State to know**; therefore, those skills SHOULD be covered in the curriculum. Skills should be taught **directly** in the **specific format** used on the TEAMS. It is vital that teachers be familiar with the objectives and the item specifications so that they cover them in the SAME FORMAT as they will appear on the test.

Everyone should realize it is OK, in fact essential, for all teachers to teach to the TEAMS objectives. They are minimum skills every student should know!

SHOULD TEACHERS COVER OTHER MATERIAL BESIDES TEAMS OBJECTIVES?

Most teachers (81%) believed it is appropriate to move on to other concepts and skills once TEAMS objectives are mastered. Only 14% were neutral, and 5% disagreed.

All students can benefit from instruction on the TEAMS objectives. Coverage of the TEAMS should be interspersed with other instruction throughout the year. A focus on TEAMS should also help low achievers perform better on the ITBS or TAP, because both tests cover the basic minimum skills.

The TEAMS skills of **higher** achievers should be checked and remediated as necessary. Students should then move on to more challenging material. Otherwise, the total amount of learning that will occur during the year might be reduced.

1986-87 TEAMS RESULTS

Clearly the efforts to improve performance on the TEAMS at all grade levels have been effective. Because average- and high-achieving students already have high pass rates, efforts must continue to focus particularly on low achievers. Because the skills measured by the TEAMS are not trivial, it is important that teachers of low-achieving students and the special programs that serve them continue to focus on TEAMS objectives. Major findings for AISD overall follow.

- Students in AISD scored higher on the 1987 TEAMS than on the 1986 TEAMS.

- In grades 1 through 9, the gains made by AISD students from 1986 to 1987 were not as large as the gains made by students in the other Texas urban districts. As a consequence, AISD's rank among the urban districts decreased in some areas. Mathematics is the area most in need of improvement (especially grades 5 and 7).

- On the Exit-Level TEAMS, AISD has ranked number 1 since 1985. Virtually all (99.4%) of the potential graduates passed both areas of the Exit-Level TEAMS, thus fulfilling this State requirement for graduation.

For more information see the ORE Report: The TEAMS Report, 1987 (#86.13) in your school library or from ORE.

CHAPTER 1 STUDENTS

In 1986-87, Chapter 1 teachers reported their instructional emphasis was the TEAMS reading objectives. Did this emphasis pay off?

Yes! The percentage of Chapter 1 students mastering the TEAMS in reading improved dramatically in 1987 over 1986. The graph illustrates the percent mastery for grade 3, along with comparison groups of low-achieving students not served by Chapter 1, all District grade 3 students tested, and the statewide averages for Chapter 1 students.

Key Findings:

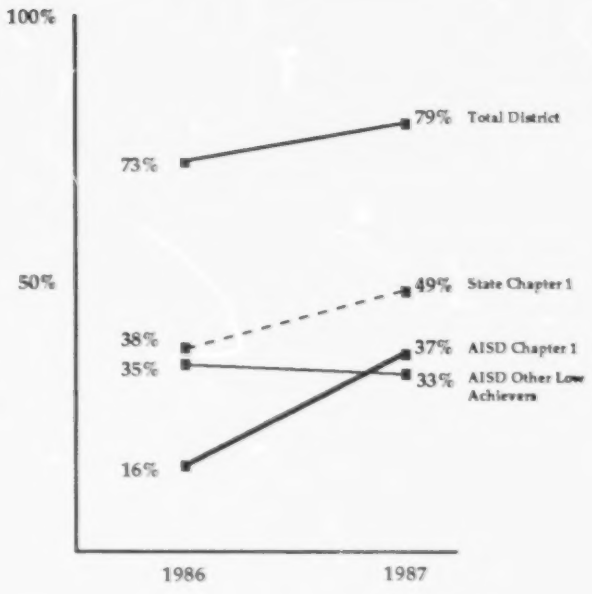
- Chapter 1 students showed the greatest improvement of any group, with grades 1 and 3 showing the most dramatic increase;

- Chapter 1 students improved at all grade levels, while other AISD low achievers not served by Chapter 1 decreased in percent mastery at each grade level; and

- AISD's Chapter 1 mastery percentages are still below statewide Chapter 1 averages and far below the average for all AISD students tested at grades 1, 3, and 5.

For more information, see the ORE Report: Chapter 1 & Chapter 1 Migrant Evaluation Findings (#86.05) in your school library or from ORE.

Grade 3 TEAMS Mastery



LEP STUDENTS

For the first time in 1986-87, a Spanish TEAMS was available at grades 1 and 3. A one-time exemption was also available for non-Hispanic LEP students at grades 1 and 3, and all LEP students at grades 5, 7, and 9. The students' Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) decided whether, and in which language, students would be tested. Caution must be taken when comparing AISD to other districts in the State because there may be differences in populations served and in testing decisions made by various LPAC's. At the exit-level, LEP students may not be exempted.

Key Findings:

English TEAMS -- Exit Level

On the Exit-Level TEAMS, AISD LEP students showed:

- Higher mastery in mathematics than in language arts.

- October eleventh-grade passing rates that were higher than the State in mathematics but lower than the State in language arts.

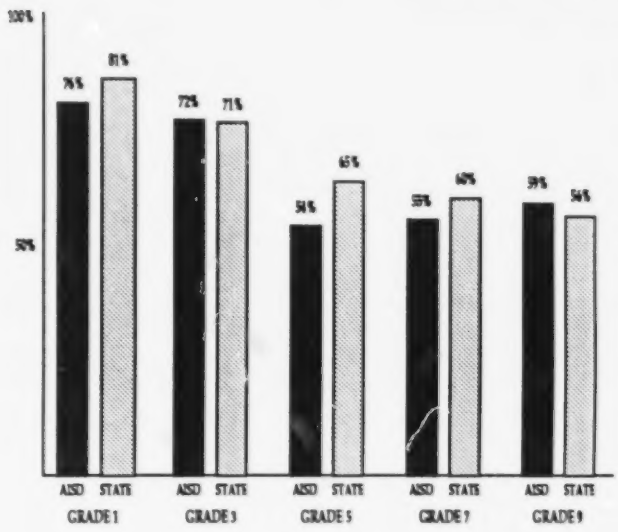
- High mastery of the Exit-Level TEAMS overall, with 79 of 83 (95%) 12th graders mastering the TEAMS. Of the four LEP twelfth graders denied diplomas because they failed the TEAMS, three had entered AISD for the first time in 1986-87. However, only 17 students overall in AISD failed to graduate because of the TEAMS; LEP students represent 24% of this group.

English TEAMS -- Grades 1 - 9

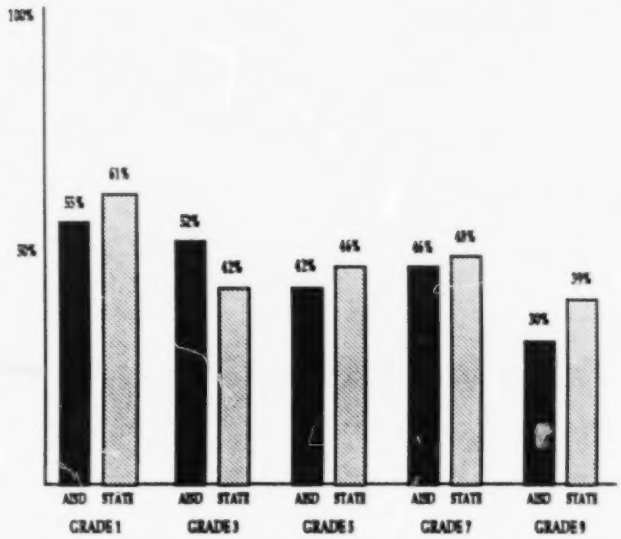
At grades 1 through 9, AISD LEP students showed:

- The highest mastery percentages in mathematics, generally followed by reading, and finally writing.
- The highest mastery percentages at grade 1, generally declining through grade 9.
- Higher mastery than LEP students statewide in 5 of 15 comparisons.
  - ✓ AISD LEP students are showing the best performance relative to the State in reading and writing at grade 3.
  - ✓ AISD LEP students need the most improvement to match State performance in mathematics at grade 5, and reading and writing at grade 9.

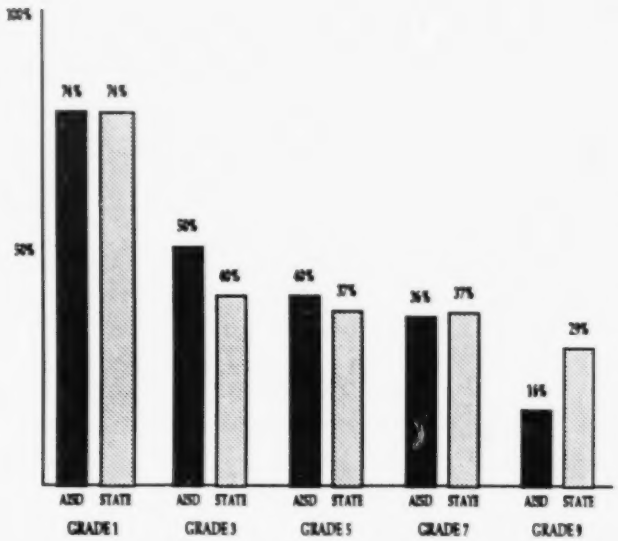
MATHEMATICS MASTERY LEP ENGLISH TEAMS



READING MASTERY LEP ENGLISH TEAMS



WRITING MASTERY LEP ENGLISH TEAMS



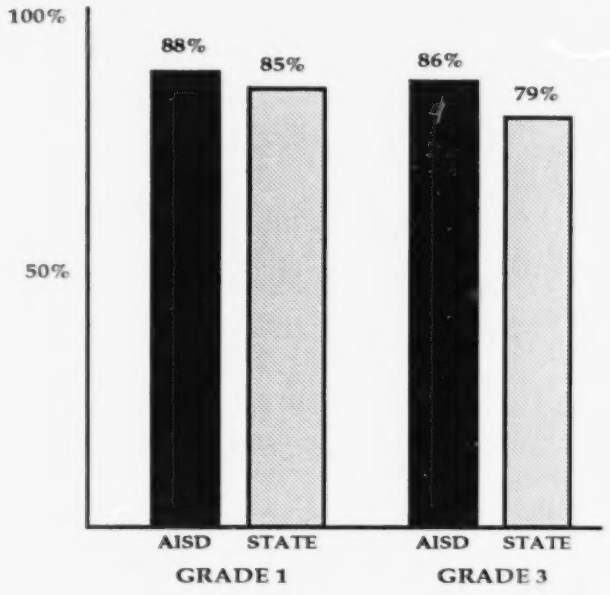
Spanish TEAMS -- Grades 1 and 3

AISD LEP students tested in Spanish at grades 1 and 3 showed:

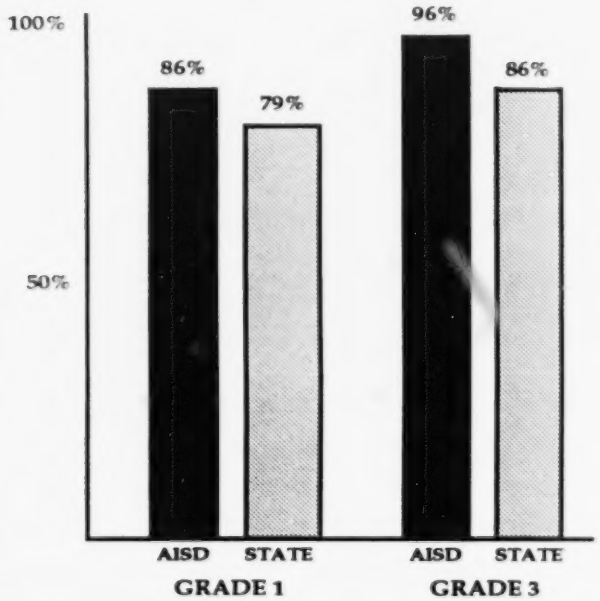
- High mastery percentages in all areas (85% - 96%).
- Higher mastery than LEP students tested statewide in Spanish at both grades in all areas.

For more information, see the ORE Report: Programs for Students with Limited English Proficiency (#86.43) in your school library or from ORE.

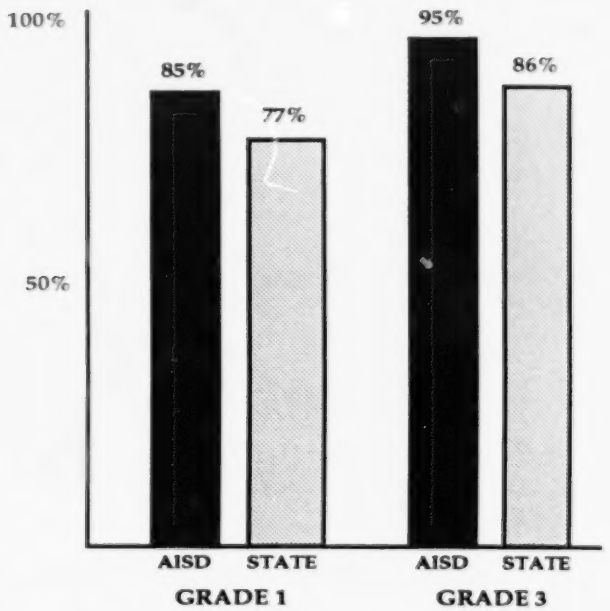
LEP SPANISH TEAMS
MATHEMATICS MASTERY



LEP SPANISH TEAMS
READING MASTERY



LEP SPANISH TEAMS
WRITING MASTERY



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR TEAMS

Only 30% of teachers surveyed last spring reported they were familiar with Dr. James Popham's strategies for improving students' performance on TEAMS. Dr. Popham advised the Texas Education Agency (TEA) on development of the TEAMS and is a national authority on criterion-referenced tests. His strategies may help you prepare your students for the TEAMS.

1. Understand TEAMS objectives.

   ✓ Know what the objectives and specifications are.

   ✓ Discuss objectives in detail in small groups.

   ✓ Write practice test items, being sure to match the specifications and the format.

   ✓ Learn which objectives match which essential elements.

2. Find out how well instructional materials match TEAMS objectives, ***as they are measured.***

   ✓ Review the objectives and determine whether the ways they are taught match TEAMS measurement specifications.

   ✓ If formats and styles used in instructional materials do not match TEAMS formats, styles, and specifications, find ways to prevent differences from confusing students.

   ✓ Review teaching plans to ensure that all objectives are taught before the TEAMS testing date.

3. Determine how much time is being spent on TEAMS objectives -- increase if necessary.

   ✓ Focus tutorial time and Chapter 1 and SCE instruction on TEAMS objectives.

   ✓ Reduce time used for noninstructional activities.

   ✓ Incorporate TEAMS into daily lessons and use the first five minutes in any subject to reinforce TEAMS skills.

4. Become familiar with TEAMS instructional strategies guides.

   ✓ Learn how they are organized.

   ✓ Set aside time to review in detail.

   ✓ Test knowledge through exercises or group discussion.

5. Develop practice exercises that match TEAMS objectives.

   ✓ Add TEAMS vocabulary words to regular instruction.

   ✓ Develop and use tests in TEAMS format and within TEAMS specifications.

6. Organize the classroom based on TEAMS mastery.

   ✓ Focus tutorials and compensatory instruction on TEAMS objectives.

   ✓ Group students for some activities on previous TEAMS raw scores, for the correct instructional level.

7. Implement principles of effective teaching in the TEAMS context.

   ✓ Apply effective teaching techniques to teaching TEAMS objectives.

   ✓ Consider BEST and TESA information to decide which students to call on.

   ✓ Document and share motivational techniques used to promote interest and performance in TEAMS areas.

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